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OTHER MATTERS

PLAN OF ACTION TO STRENGTHEN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has achieved an unprecedented rate of ratification. As of November 2000, with 191 States parties, the Convention is the first legally binding international human rights instrument which is close to universal ratification. Only two States are not yet party to it.

2. By identifying problems, making recommendations and institutionalizing innovative methods of work, the Committee has succeeded since 1991 in generating a strong partnership for local, national, regional and international action to promote and protect the rights of the child. Nowadays the Committee on the Rights of the Child is a recognized catalyst of intellectual, financial and human resources for the improvement of the rights of the child in all countries.

3. Global success has generated an ever-increasing amount of work for all partners involved in the implementation and monitoring process, including for the Committee itself. As of November 2000, the Committee had received 153 initial and 44 periodic States parties' reports. It had reviewed 137 reports, leaving a backlog of over 60 reports resulting in a waiting list of approximately two years. Despite its heavy workload (three months of meetings per year), the Committee has systematically searched for ways and means to decrease this backlog of work.

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4. One of the solutions suggested by the Committee in 1995 in order to improve its working capacity, both quantitatively and qualitatively, was to establish a support team with a view to preparing the discussions between Committee members and representatives of States parties and identifying potential areas for follow-up work, including technical cooperation. This idea led to the design and adoption of the High Commissioner's Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Plan of Action, finalized in November 1996, became operational in July 1997. It is financed through voluntary contributions, with an estimated budget in 2001 of US$ 749,600.

5. The Plan of Action served as a pilot project for other human rights treaty bodies which subsequently adopted similar projects. It is now part of a global programme to improve the servicing of the treaty monitoring system, which is financed through extrabudgetary resources and has been one of the priority items in the two annual appeals of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for 2000 and 2001.

6. The main achievements of the Plan of Action during the period 1999-2000 can be summarized as follows:

(a) The provision of direct support to the Committee on the Rights of the Child for its sessions and pre-sessional working groups through assistance, inter alia, in gathering and analysing available information, preparing comprehensive country analyses, drafting lists of issues and helping the Committee to identify major issues to be discussed. In this regard it is important to mention that in September 1999, the Committee decided to increase the number of reports it would consider at each session from six to nine, which represents a 50 per cent increase. This measure has resulted in a decrease in the time lapse between submission and consideration of reports from nearly four to approximately two years;

(b) The follow-up to the Committee's recommendations through various activities, including initiatives undertaken at national level (e.g. the national workshop on juvenile justice held in Uganda during 2000), participation in the United Nations Coordination Panel on Technical Advice and Assistance in Juvenile Justice, and involvement in the design of technical cooperation projects of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR);

(c) Various other activities, including:

(i) Assistance in organizing the Convention's tenth anniversary commemorative meeting (co-organized by the Committee and OHCHR);

(ii) Convening a national consultation in Haiti to support the State party's drafting process of its initial report under the Convention;

(iii) Assistance in organizing the 2000 day of general discussion of the Committee on "State violence against children" held in collaboration with the Committee against Torture and the Special Rapporteur on the question of torture;

(iv) Background work for the drafting of a general comment on article 29.1 of the Convention regarding the aims of education; the general comment will be submitted to the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance;

(v) Assisting Committee members and participating in outreach activities such as training programmes, seminars and conferences, as well as meetings and briefings of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations;

(vi) Assisting and cooperating, whenever requested, with other United Nations agencies and bodies, including human rights mechanisms, to mainstream child rights within their activities and projects.

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